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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3774  
INFO RUCNMER/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000614

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/20/2029  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [ETTC](#) [CU](#) [AR](#)  
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: INFORMATION FOR COUNTRY REVIEW  
REGARDING TITLE III OF LIBERTAD ACT

REF: (A) STATE 48487 (B) BUENOS AIRES 0075

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (SBU) Post responses to questions in para 5 of ref A follow:

¶2. (C) Has the host country, in Post's opinion, worked to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba? Answer: No. The GOA has not taken public or private actions in the past year to promote the advancement of democracy and human rights in Cuba. Per ref B, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner visited Cuba January 18-21 and did not publicly advocate any reforms to expand human rights or democracy in the country. Argentine press criticized the Government for its failure to meet with dissidents or advocate for human rights and also for the timing of the visit, which coincided with the U.S. inauguration of President Obama.

¶3. (SBU) Has the host country made statements on Cuban human rights abuses or supported Cuban civil society? Answer: No. On April 17 at the Fifth Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, President Fernandez de Kirchner delivered the inaugural address and called for Cuba's reinsertion into the Organization of American States without conditions. She made no mention of reforms related to human rights or democracy in Cuba. In early 2009, the Argentine body responsible for granting refugee status to foreigners granted such status to a Cuban nurse who had requested asylum in 2007 after refusing to return to Cuba and making criticisms of the government. Unnamed Foreign Ministry sources confirmed in May to daily newspaper "Clarín" that Roberto Cruz Cruz had been granted refugee status, but they emphasized that it was not political asylum.

¶4. (C) Have there been any high-level diplomatic visits between Cuba and the host country in the past six months? Answer: Yes, President Fernandez de Kirchner's January 18-21 visit to Cuba included separate meetings with Raul and Fidel Castro, public speeches, and the signing of eleven bilateral agreements. Despite extensive speculation in the press before the visit as well as advocacy by the Embassy, CFK declined to include human rights or a meeting with Cuban dissidents on her agenda. She also declined to meet with dissident doctor Hilda Molina, who has been refused a passport by the Cuban government and has been unable to visit her family in Argentina.

¶5. (SBU) What is the nature of investments that host country businesses have in Cuba? Answer: The GOA imposes no requirement to register foreign direct investment. The Embassy has been unable to uncover any major investments by Argentine nationals or Argentine public corporations in Cuba. Foreign Ministry officials also tell Post they are unaware

of significant Argentine investment in Cuba. Argentine media reported a minor investment by Argentine industrial oven manufacturer, Simpa Iberoamericana. Simpa reportedly has entered into agreements to export unassembled ovens produced in Argentina (Rosario) to Cuba, where they are assembled and installed in Cuban bakeries.

¶16. (SBU) The President's spokesperson announced after CFK's January 2009 trip to Cuba that an Argentine company has received a license to market Cohiba Havana cigars throughout Latin America and that another Argentine company won representation rights to market Cuban medicines. The GoA's Investment Agency, ProsperAr, does not include any reference to Cuba in its 91-page 2008 report on foreign direct investment in Argentina.

¶17. (SBU) Bilateral trade volumes are small. According to the Global Trade Information Service (gtis.com), two-way Argentine-Cuban trade in 2008 totaled USD 87.9 million, down 15% from bilateral trade of USD 103.7 in 2007. This represents less than 0.1 percent of Argentina's total global two-way trade in 2008 of USD 128 billion. Argentine exports to Cuba fell 15% from USD 100.6 million in 2007 to USD 85.3 million in 2008, while Argentine imports from Cuba fell 14% from USD 3 million in 2007 to USD 2.6 million in 2008. Argentine exports are mainly comprised of foodstuffs (approximately 60% of the total), led by wheat flour (32% of total) and dairy (9%). Roughly 48% of imports were medicines and 31% were tobacco products (mainly cigars).

¶18. (SBU) According to Argentine media, the 11 agreements that CFK and Raul Castro signed during CFK's January 2009 visit to Cuba covered diplomatic passports and visas, commercial

cooperation and promotion and technology transfer in international trade, as well as understandings in the area of labor markets, humanitarian assistance, peaceful use of nuclear energy and technical cooperation in agriculture, fishing, food production, forestry, biotechnology and rural development. They also approved a report on the progress made in implementing past scientific and technical agreements (related to joint production of medicines, rational use of energy, technical assistance in mining and geology, and the creation of a binational center to develop medicines and vaccines).

¶19. (SBU) Foreign Ministry contacts state that the GoA and GoC have yet to resolve the bilateral debt that Cuba owes Argentina, which amounts to about USD 2.7 billion. This debt dates to Cuban purchases in the 1970s of Argentine products (mainly cars). Because of this debt, Argentine banks -- public and private -- will not provide unsecured trade finance facilities to the GOC.

¶110. (SBU) Are there bilateral trade or other cooperative agreements between Argentina and Cuba? Answer: The governments of Argentina and Cuba signed a regional preferential trade agreement through MERCOSUR, during the MERCOSUR summit in Cordoba, Argentina, on July 21, 2006. Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay are also parties of this ALADI (Asociacion Latinoamericana de Integracion) agreement. MERCOSUR reports note that this agreement consolidated prior bilateral trade agreements that MERCOSUR member nations had earlier signed with Cuba under ALADI auspices. In Argentina's case, it consolidated a prior ALADI agreement on Regional preferences, signed December 30, 1999. Argentina and Cuba are parties of at least seven other ALADI multilateral agreements, covering trade, technology transfer, and cultural, educational, and scientific exchange, among other issues.

¶111. (SBU) World Bank reports note that Argentina signed a preferential trade agreement with Cuba in 1984. The Argentine Foreign Ministry reports that a bilateral Argentina-Cuba agreement designed to facilitate trade finance via the establishment of Cuban escrow accounts was signed in August 2004, but has never taken effect. The two countries also have a Bilateral Investment Treaty, ratified in 1997.

In June 2008, the Governments of Cuba and Argentina signed a commercial exchange agreement under which Argentina was to purchase four million energy efficient light bulbs from Cuba in return for Cuban purchases of an equivalent value of Argentine foodstuffs. This transaction does not appear in 2008 trade figures, so it may have been delayed to 2009.

¶12. (SBU) Are there exchange programs between Argentina and Cuba? Answer: According the Embassy of Cuba website, Cuba has sponsored its "Yes, I can" literacy program in the country since 2003, reaching 15,060 persons in 25 municipalities, across 10 provinces. Some Argentine citizens have also benefited from "Operation Miracle," a joint GOC-Government of Venezuela initiative that provides free eye operations to low income people. The General Workers Confederation (CGT), the main Argentine labor union confederation, actively participates in both programs. The website also reports that the GOC has sponsored a group of 60 Argentine students to study at its Latin American School of Medicine, from which 160 Argentines have already graduated. It also reported that some 900 Argentines are studying in Cuba at ELAM, the International School of Physical Education and Sports, as well as other universities.

WAYNE